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Lau, Albert Ed. *Southeast Asia and the Cold War*. New York: Routledge. 2012.

The anthology under review, the outcome of a 2009 conference, explicitly sets out to challenge the neglect of Southeast Asia in Cold War research, the underrated value of the local and an intra-regional focus, and the over-utilization of the Cold War as analytical frame for regional change. The mostly local contributors' socio-political and geo-political histories tackle these issues connecting local, regional, as well as extra-regional historical dynamics and agendas in an introductory part and two parts on the countries constituting Southeast Asia's "lower and upper arcs."¹

Lau's introduction outlines the regional changes resulting from the European exit(s), Japanese entry and exit, European return and rise of nationalist forces, decolonization and integration, and internationalization of the region as a global barrier between the Indian Ocean and Pacific Oceans with the rise of American and Soviet influence in the region. Using the different chapters, Lau moves on to note how the Cold War was both shaped by and itself shaped the dynamics of each country in the region and how, following the Vietnam war, regional dynamics came to the fore through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Sino-American and Soviet-American relations, the American disengagement from Vietnam, and the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. Where Lau provides multiple angles, Tarling focuses on regional British policies, in particular. He argues that the region was strategically important to the British from 1945 to the late 1960s—although they had increasing difficulties navigating the multiple and often conflicting agendas of allies, nationalist forces, and communist agents while losing ground both regionally and globally. The main goal of the British in the 1960s thus became avoiding war with China while committing the US to the region. As the British disengaged, the region lost its strategic significance, and the goals of the British shifted to keeping Communism at bay by influencing US policies; keeping Singapore as a military holding point; retaining the support of Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia; increasing trade; and, finally, supporting ASEAN as a counterweight to China. While Tarling's focus is strictly on the British strategies, his concise overview sets the stage for the subsequent parts of the text, which offers enriching regional perspectives, literature, and archival materials.

Jose opens the section on the lower arc by outlining the Philippine governments' attempts to gain American security guarantees and a regional non-military alliance from 1946 to 1951. He fails to flush out clearly the neo-colonial relationship, however. The continuities of the US imperial police regime in the new Philippine internal security force, the continued US military presence and pressure to provide a Philippine contingent for the Korean War, and the "failure" to remove the special investment rights and to include the Philippines in the then-emerging regional trade cannot be interpreted too many other ways. Lau continues with a strong analysis of the impact of the early Cold War on the process of separating Singapore from the Straits Settlements to the 1959 elections that saw the chief minister post go to the dominant left-wing party. Taking into account differences in age and ethnic background, the growing power of the former colonized as citizens, public opinion, the making and ideas of Singaporean politicians, the overall growing Singaporean autonomy, and the British navigation, Lau's analysis provides a good example of new Cold War political history. The subsequent chapter, by Fernando, pairs well with Lau's, as Fernando shifts attention to the entanglements of the decolonization and Cold War processes on other side of the strait. He shows clearly how Malaya, the insurgency of the Malayan Communist Party and Southeast Asia, become increasingly important not only to the interests and plans of the British, the Americans, and the Malay but also to those of Australia and New Zealand interests and planning. In

¹ The countries constituting the lower arc are typically Malaya, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines, while those constituting the upper arc are Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Laos.

a later chapter, Ken merges the political with the social by shifting focus to the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) members through memoirs emerging from the mid-1990s. Using the memoirs to illuminate the regional spread of Communist ideas in the 1920-1930s to the structure of the MCP military units, its military tactics in both urban and jungle settings, as well as political tactics domestically and internationally, its mistakes, difficulties and defeats, this chapter is a welcome perspective from the “other side.” Staying on the topic of the socio-politics of Malaysia, Gin points to the importance of migration patterns, class, ethnicity, and age for Cold War analysis by way of the developments in North Borneo. After showing how the hitherto insular and ethnocentric Chinese gradually became increasingly militant following a battle for their education system with the colonial power until 1963 and how a Chinese left wing political organization gained broader influence, the author explains how and why the colonial regime and the governments of Indonesia and China began positioning themselves at the regional level. Closing this part, Anwar uses existing research to show how Indonesia’s initial period of careful non-alignment and its domestic balancing act; subsequent veer towards the Soviet Union under Sukarno; and last Cold War decades as a regionalist, pro-western, and anti-communist military regime at various times and to different extents reflected local, national, and regional as well as American, Chinese, and Soviet agendas.

Tung opens the part on the upper arc (Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos) with a strong analysis that connects Vietnamese colonial, intellectual, socio-political, and pre-Cold War revolutionary histories with the larger geopolitical picture. The Indochina war, it is shown, was initiated as a nationalist anti-colonial struggle against France but shifted to an ideological war—part of the larger imperial struggle of the Cold War—involving mainly the US, China, and the Soviet Union, to varying degrees of involvement. Connecting well with the chapter of Tung, junior scholar Van provides a broad analysis of ASEAN-Vietnam relations and the growing importance and agency of intra-regional cooperation. ASEAN member states, she shows, shift from contributing military forces to the Vietnam War and the declaring of ZOPFAN² as a signal (especially to China) to withdrawing their forces from Vietnam and renegotiating US base rights, while North Vietnam moderated its view of ASEAN from 1973 onwards. Drawing upon his PhD dissertation, Osornprasop outlines the mostly unknown massive Thai military involvement in Laos from the late 1960s to 1973. After reflecting on the politics of access to Thai archives, he shows convincingly via recently declassified US materials, oral history interviews, and memoirs of former CIA officers that Thailand trained Laotians for guerrilla warfare, flew sorties under Laotian flag, deployed 15% of its armed forces in Laos, and took part in the US bombing campaigns in Laos. Mead confronts the idealized narrative of the 1973 collapse of the Thai military dictatorship, which has historically been centred on social unrest. Laying bare the ties of the US with the political and economic networks of the Thai political and military elites and the monarchy and often-conflicting interests via primarily American and British sources, she demonstrates how the cooperative failures between the US, the Thai military, and the Thai monarchy, rather than social unrest, caused the collapse. After also reflecting on archival access and the importance thereof to the dominant narratives in research and those in power today, Guan utilizes American and Australian archives to shed light on Southeast Asian reactions to the 1970 coup against the Cambodian head of state. In an analysis showing the growing importance of regional integration and the associated conferences, inclusion of Australia and New Zealand as regional stakeholders, and, not least, the frustrations of the countries of the lower arc regarding the lack of influence in Cambodia, he closes the last part nicely.

The contributors provide new insights, challenge established truths, and touch upon many analytical and epistemological issues. They thereby illustrate the importance of approaching the

² Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality.

region in the Cold War via a globalized, intra-regional focus sensitive to Chinese, Soviet, British, and American agendas and actions, as well as local and regional ones, deeper historical dynamics, and intensifying interdependence between the lower and upper arcs. The best chapters here combine global and regional high politics with “bottom up” or “inside” perspectives by assigning greater significance to the growing influence of the region’s “new” political systems and actors (such as citizens, social movements, and politicians), additionally point to the importance of situating intersecting factors such as religion, ethnicity, class, gender, and age in their geopolitical context. Others similarly indicate the importance of including ideas, social memory, intellectual exchanges, and sources such as memoirs or oral history interviews. Additionally, the reflections on power and archival access in the various countries could serve well as inspiration.

While the way decolonization and the imperial Cold War struggle pushed many former European colonies towards various degrees of willing or forced neo-colonial militarized developmental regimes of the US and USSR is touched upon in the chapters on Thailand and Indonesia, future research clearly must interrogate this further. The roles of the most probable systemic continuities from European and Japanese imperial regimes of governance into the new formally decolonized state apparatuses and the international organizations (especially in the early Cold War) also remain unaddressed but important issues. Indeed, the Thai gendarmerie and the Royal Thai Border Police as well as the inter-imperial regional health organizations in the inter-war years and post-war international health organizations are cases in point. Researchers, in other words, need to place more clearly the transformation of imperial modes of governance in the region on not only but especially the Cold War research agenda.

Overall, the book represents an important contribution to promoting complex analyses of the Cold War and contains a strong collection for historians and scholars of international relations and global studies interested in understanding and teaching not only the connections between the regional and global as well as the social and political in the Cold War but also Southeast Asia today.

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